

IN RESPONSE TO THE WORKERS UNITY ORGANIZATION  
by the PWOC

The WUO proceeds from some of the same premises and repeats some of the same arguments of the BPO. But the WUO focuses more on the question of a center. The WUO is concerned that we do not "proclaim" ourselves a leading ideological center. Like the BPO they see in the conception of a leading center a misrepresentation of our maturity.

Of course we cannot and should not "proclaim" the existence of a leading ideological center. But who has suggested such a course?

What does it mean to say we want to create a leading ideological center? It does not mean that we intend to hang out a sign informing all those concerned that we are the leadership for the Marxist-Leninist movement. Rather it is a description of the function of the center, its purpose being to lead the work of constructing a trend forward. A leading center is distinguished from a center that would merely coordinate. As the draft resolution succinctly put it: "...a leading ideological center...would see its task as shaping the process of unification, organization and theoretical development of the trend; it would be an instrument for the conscious forging of a clearly defined tendency."

In order to lead the center must have political authority...that is it must have the confidence of those who adhere to it and the capacity to win new adherents. Clearly a leading center cannot be proclaimed or legislated. Its leading character, its political authority must be earned...it must be developed over a period of time in which the practice of the center establishes itself. Any organizational entity we create in the immediate future will not and could not come into being with its leadership credentials fully developed.

The real point is that we be clear that we aim to build a center with this leading character, not that we proclaim the existence of such a center. The point is that we invest the center with the mandate to develop in this direction rather than restricting its aims to communication and coordination. This in our view is what is meant concretely by calling for a leading center. The debate should focus on whether or not we have sufficient unity and maturity to take this modest but critical step.

Part of the WUO's concern about the draft resolution stems from a definite misunderstanding as to what is being proposed as the basis of unity for the center. The WUO argues that the basis on which this center should be organized should be no higher than the unity embodied in the 18 principles" (we agree) and finds a contradiction to this in the resolution when it states that the level of unity must be higher than the lowest common denominator. The WUO asks what this "higher level of unity consists of." But there is no contradiction here. The 18 principles do go beyond the lowest common denominator and it was precisely for this reason they were introduced. It is the unity principles that provide a basis for unity that is at once not so high as to be exclusive and not so low as to make leadership impossible. And it is the unity principles which are the basis on which organizations adhere to the center. The WUO appears to have simply misunderstood this section of the draft resolution.

The WUO's attitude toward the 18 principles appears to be contradictory. On the onehand they say they accept the 18 principles as providing a "sufficient basis" of unity. Yet elsewhere WUO says we should see these principles as "draft" principles. WUO also objects once again to the exclusion of the PUL inspite of the fact that the PUL clearly stands outside the principles of unity.

The 18 principles are not only sufficient but necessary basis for unity. The WUO apparently believes the unity principles to be sufficient but unecessary if such a formulation makes any sense. Clearly the 18 principles are not draft principles given that they were formally adopted and amended at the August meeeting. And it is also clear that if we adhere to these principles wt leads necessairly to the exclusion of the PUL. The WUO appears to reject the verdict of the August meeting which is certainly their perogative. However the WUO is not at liberty to urge us to view the unity principles as draft principles after they have been adopted.

We wish to respond to two final points. First the WUO in discussing it's concern that our forces have not fully assimilated the dangers of left opportunism cites the PWOC as a case in point because we identified rightism as the main error in the PWOC's practice over the last period in an Organizer article on our convention.

We would like to reassure the WUO that the PWOC does not regard itself as immune from left errors. We have in no way revised our views on ultra leftism as the main danger to our forces. But it would be dangerously mechanical to conclude that because of this "leftism" is necessairly the main danger to every organization at all points in time. The PWOC has viewed dogmatism and ultra-leftism as the main danger from it's inception and while we have certainly made left errors the main struggle within the PWOC histroically has been against right deviations. Thus the judgement of our convention does not represent some startling shift but is consistent with our previous development. We think the WUO's preoccupation with the alleged tendency toward voluntarism on the part of the Committee of Five has led them to read something into the situation that simply isn't there.

Finally in their discusssion of the Iskra period the WUO engages in a bit of sleight of hand. In the last section of this part of their paper WUO quotes Lenin to show that the aim of Iskra was "to develop a common Party literature...common...in the sense that it must unite all the available literary forces, that it must express all shades of opinion and views prevailing among Russian Social Democrats..." In drawing the paralell with the present WUO chides us for excluding literary forces like the PUL.

But in fact this was not the aim of Iskra. The quotation utilized by WUO is from the draft declaration. In the final published draft which set forward the aims of Iskra the section quoted by WUO is absent. The whole emphasis ia the final version is on the need to sharpen the lines of demarcation between economism and social democracy. There is no call for Iskra to express "all shades of opinion and views." It would appear that these changes were made at the insistence of Plekhanov although there is no way to be certain. Whatever their origin there is no boubt that ths final draft represented the actual editorial policy of Iskra and not the quotation utilized by the WUO. The WUO is guilty of misrepresenting the actual aims and character of Iskra in order that we may "learn the right lessons."